

**Statement to the Connecticut General Assembly Transportation Committee  
on Road Pricing and Congestion Mitigation**

By

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment today. My name is David Kooris and I am the Connecticut Director of Regional Plan Association.

The final report of the Electronic Tolls and Congestion Pricing Study can only be viewed within the context of broader goals for mobility within the state.

Any road pricing regime needs to be part of an integrated mobility strategy that aims to meet the transportation needs of the state of Connecticut while minimizing negative environmental, economic, and social impacts.

Our policies need to enable long-term prosperity, limit the magnitude of global warming, and evenly distribute the burden of maintaining the state's transportation system in a state of good repair and investing in only those expansion projects that better position our state for challenges which will face us in the decades to come.

While road pricing in isolation will never result in a balanced and sustainable mobility system in our state, it can certainly play an important role in helping us meet that goal.

Four of the greatest transportation challenges ever to face Connecticut converge in a perfect storm on the near horizon: transportation emissions make up 40% of the state's greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, congestion chokes several of our corridors and imposes a blunt tax on doing business and living in our state, about 1/3 of our bridges are structurally deficient, and yet our Special Transportation Fund surplus is projected to be exhausted by 2011 running deficits thereafter.

We need to make more efficient use of our current mobility system, we need to balance this system out by providing alternatives to the automobile in those neighborhoods and corridors that can support walking, biking, and transit, and we need to raise the revenue necessary to maintain the system and fund appropriate expansions.

Road pricing, if done properly, can help us work towards achieving these goals.

Effectively calibrated geographically and temporally variable price signals can dramatically enhance the efficient usage of the current system while raising the revenues so necessary to maintain it and fund enhancements.

As the study shows, however, no single alternative is without its challenges and none provides us with a quick fix. Road pricing cannot, therefore, be relied upon to meet our immediate fiscal needs. Other strategies that can be enacted quickly will need to be identified to keep the system operating at a state of good repair and to fund capital improvements during the coming years.

The objectives that should be met through ride pricing are medium- to long-term congestion relief, transportation emissions and vehicle miles travelled (VMT) reduction, and revenue generation whose burden equitably distributed.

I will briefly address each of the fiscally positive and feasible alternatives.

Border tolling does not impact congestion or VMT, the revenue it raises would be confined to a handful of highway corridors in the state, and it would have a markedly detrimental impact on the labor markets of any job center near the state line. I have included in my testimony commuter shed maps of both Stamford and Hartford which depict their many workers living outside of Connecticut.

Truck tolls appear an attractive revenue generating opportunity, but provide no congestion relief if implemented without time variability and can divert enough trucks to local streets to have negative impacts on local community character and economic vitality. Time variable truck tolling should be examined with the aim of shifting them outside the peak rather than shifting them off the highway.

Tolls to pay for new capacity on eastern 95 and western 84 provide quite the conundrum. By limiting demand, they could effectively save us \$2.5 billion but would have very constrained revenue streams and would cause significant impact to the town centers of Shoreline East. We should be exploring other strategies that would similarly eliminate the need for these road expansion projects.

In regards to pricing VMT I quote the study, "The only anticipated environmental impacts from this concept would be improvements in air quality and reductions in energy consumption..." None of these alternatives would be operational in less than 10 years and this – the most equitable mechanism to manage our road system and fund the next generation of sustainable mobility infrastructure – is becoming closer to reality each and every day. Connecticut's early pursuit of this alternative is appropriately timed to impact the pending transportation authorization and influence federal policy, leading the nation towards mobility management and

financing strategies that will be an eventual inevitable step if this nation is to become serious about advancing mobility in a carbon-constrained world.

That being said, congested corridor tolling in the southwestern corner of the state coupled with time variable pricing is an appropriate strategy to encourage efficient use of our most constrained highway infrastructure while providing a revenue stream for targeted highway enhancements, route 1 improvements, and transit alternatives and it would move lower Fairfield County toward a balanced mobility system that meets the needs of all users.

These alternatives cannot be viewed in isolation and we cannot look to any one of them for the solution to all our problems, but variable time of day road pricing implemented throughout the road system can move us towards more efficient use of our existing system while paying for its maintenance and funding new projects which position Connecticut for generations of prosperity in an age of carbon constraint.

Thank you.

